

Edwards: Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Increases VA Budget by \$4.9 Billion

Returns Nation's Budget to Balance by 2012

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Representative Chet Edwards today supported final passage of the final fiscal year 2009 Budget Resolution, which puts the nation's budget on a path to balance by 2012. Edwards, a senior member of the House Budget Committee, was a member of the House-Senate conference committee that wrote the final budget plan and played a key role in increasing the veterans' portion of the budget by \$4.9 billion.

"When it comes to veterans, our nation has a moral obligation to keep its promise to those who kept their promises to serve our nation in uniform," said Edwards, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs. "After years of veterans' budgets that barely, if at all, kept pace with inflation, leaving America's heroes with inadequate health care and benefits, it is now a new day for our vets.

"Starting in 2007, the new Congress increased veterans' health care and benefits by \$11.8 billion, the largest increase in the 77 year history of the Veterans Administration. Today, I am proud to say that the 2009 budget plan keeps faith with America's veterans by increasing VA funding to \$48.2 billion, \$3.3 billion above the Bush Administration's request and \$4.9 billion above the record 2008 level.

"Providing improved health care and education benefits for our veterans is a small price to pay, a minimal burden to bear, given our troops' sacrifice of life, limb and time away from home. It is but a small down payment on a debt of gratitude we can never fully repay."

Department of Veterans Funding under Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Resolution:

- \$48.2 billion overall 2009 for discretionary veterans programs
- The conference agreement provides \$4.9 billion (11.4 percent) more than the comparable 2008 level
- The conference agreement provides \$3.3 billion more than the President's budget for veterans for 2009 and \$39 billion more than the President's budget over five years (2009-2013)
- The conference agreement rejects the health care fee increases proposed by the President's budget, which total \$2.3 billion over five years, including a new enrollment fee and drug co-payment increases.

This budget is strongly supported by all major veterans groups. The Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS and the Paralyzed Veterans of America said this budget provides "unwavering support for our nation's sick and disabled veterans, as well as

all of the men and women who have so honorably served this country.”

The Senate adopted the budget plan Wednesday. In 2007, Edwards authored \$11.8 billion in increased veterans’ health care and benefits in 2007, the largest increase in veterans funding in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration.